

1854—5.

VICTORIA.

GOVERNMENT BOTANIST.

REPORT OF HIS JOURNEY TO OMEO.

*LAI*D upon the COUNCIL TABLE by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, by Command of His EXCELLENCY THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, and ordered by the COUNCIL to be printed, 30th January, 1855.

The Government Botanist to the Colonial Secretary.

Omeo, 16th December, 1854.

SIR,

I do myself the honor of laying before you, for communication to His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, an account of my journey as far as this locality.

Leaving Melbourne on the 1st of November, I travelled through the Fern-tree Gullies to the La Trobe River, and thence to the Avon, and ascended Mount Wellington from the ranges of the latter stream on the 14th of November. The altitude of this mountain appears to me more than 5,000 feet, a snow storm lasting here, even at so advanced a season, for a whole day. The main journey to the central part of the Australian Alps I commenced again from the Avon on the 22nd November, proceeding to the Mitchell River, and thence to the Dargo. Following along the scrubby ranges between this river and the Wentworth, I crossed the Dividing Range between the waters of Gipps' Land and those of the Murray River near the upper part of the Cabongra. Thence I traversed a grassy table land in a north-easterly direction along the Cabongra downward, until the country appeared practicable, towards the north, to reach the highest part of the Bogong Ranges.

The ranges hereabouts, which never before have been traversed by civilized men, are generally fertile, and timbered with the mountain White Gum tree (*Eucalyptus phlebophylla*).

On the 3rd December I ascended the south-eastern of the two highest mountains of the Bogong Range. In its upper regions even the vegetation of bushes ceases, the slightly arched summit being covered with Alpine grasses and herbs. About noon I ascertained the boiling water point to be 198°, according to Fahrenheit's thermometer, and 75° according to Reaumur's scale. I am at present unable to calculate from this the barometer height and approximative altitude of this mountain, but I believe that it will be found nearly 7,000 feet above the level of the sea. The much more abrupt and yet higher summit of the north-western mount I ascended from the Upper Mitta Mitta, which skirts its base, on the 6th December. The boiling water point I observed again to be 198° F. (although the elevation of this mountain is unquestionably higher to the extent of several hundred feet), a circumstance owing to the greater atmospherical pressure of that day. The observation was instituted during the afternoon about three o'clock. On both these mountains mighty masses of snow lay far below the summits, lodging chiefly in the ravines, and these never melt entirely under the heat of the summer sun.

Considering that mountains of such altitude, probably the two highest in the Australian Continent, deserve distinctive names, I solicit His Excellency's permission to name the grandest of both Mount Hotham, and the second in height Mount La Trobe,—as I trust to be entitled to the great honor of being the first man who ever reached these commanding summits of the Australian highland. The sky being fortunately clear during the ascent of Mount Hotham, I enjoyed a most extensive and unrestricted view over the Alps, and I did not lose this opportunity of taking bearings over to some of the principal mountains already included in the trigonometrical survey of Australia. From Mount Hotham bore Mount Aberdeen (the southern peak in the Buffalo Ranges) W. 10° N., the most northern peak of the same range W. 30° N., Mount Buller W. 35° S., Mount M'Millan (of Townsend, or Castel Hill of Tyers) due S., the Cobboras mountains (between Omco and Maneroo) E. 12° N., Mount Wellington S. 10° W., Mount La Trobe (distant about eight miles) S. 25° E. Farther bearings were made to Mount Leichardt E. 30° N., to Mitchell's Plateau (in about equal distance with Mount Buller) S. 40° W., to Kennedy's Height (a rocky hill in the snowy table land, and about six miles distant) E. 5° S., to Hooker's Plateau (about fifteen miles distant) N. 25° E. The bearings from Mount La Trobe were as follow:—Mitchell's Plateau S. 15° W., Mount Aberdeen W. 5° S., Clarke's Peak (between Mitchell's Plateau and the Buffalo Ranges) S. 30° W., Mount Hotham N. 25° W. Mounts Buller, Wellington, M'Millan, and other mountains were concealed in clouds. I hope that these bearings, although only taken with a simple pocket compass, will be found sufficient and correct enough to fix the position of these mountains until an exact survey of this interesting part of the country will be performed. The signification "Bogong Range" ought to be abandoned, as the natives apply it to any of the lofty mountains when in the fissures of the rocks, chiefly when covered with the spreading Alp pine (*Podorarpus montana*), the Bogong moth occurs. One of the main branches of the Mitta Mitta has its sources at Mount La Trobe, and those of another, as well as those of the Ovens and Mitchell, lay in a lower range not far distant. This snowy highland is in many places well grassed, and the lower parts of it will be doubtless occupied as cattle runs as soon as the discovery of a workable Gold Field opens this part of the Colony. The prevailing rock is sandstone, often accompanied by slate and quartz. Granite is comparatively rare.

After extending my journeys over several mountains in the neighbourhood, and an exploration of the Upper Mitta Mitta, I went over a generally fertile country to Omco.

The amount of additional plants for the Flora of Victoria, obtained during this part of my expedition, is nearly sixty species, comprising the following genera:—*Emex*, *Drosera*, *Chaetospora*, *Gastrodia*, *Stirostylis*, *Levanora*, *Chorysanthis*, *Cassia*, *Pomaderris*, *Plantago*, *Lepidosperma*, *Devaspora*, *Astelia*, *Schidiomyrtus*, *Rammoulus*, *Veronita*, *Eurybia*, *Lemapogon*, *Patersonia*, *Grevillea*, *Pleurandra*, *Fonidium*, *Barbarea*, *Calystegia*, *Viola*, *Hypnum*, *Myosotis*, *Cryptandra*, *Erysimum*, *Prasophyllum*, *Carix*, *Ozothamnus*, *Pentachondra*, *Fungernannia*, *Boronia*, *Haplopappus*, *Stackhousia*, *Pimelia*, *Bryum*, *Bartramia*, *Hedvigia*, *Oreobalus*, *Bellendena*, *Alchemilla*. Several of the species are perfectly unknown, and nine of the genera and one natural order (*Asteliaceæ*) were previously also not represented in this Colony.

It is my intention to proceed without delay from here to the Cobboras, thence to Maneroo and the Mungang mountains, by which excursions the botanical examination of the Australian Alps will be completed.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

FERD. MUELLER.

The Honorable

The Colonial Secretary.